

Part 2

Read the text and fill the gaps with sentences A-G. Write the letter of the missing sentence in the box in the correct gap. There is one extra sentence you will not need.

Shrinking Sheep

Climate change is causing a breed of wild sheep in Scotland to shrink. Scientists would expect wild sheep to gradually get bigger, as the stronger, larger animals survive into adulthood and reproduce. But on the island of Hirta, this is not what is happening.

Scientists first began studying Soay sheep, which live only on the island of Hirta, in 1985. Since then, the sheep have decreased in size by 5%. **1** This strange phenomenon was first reported in 2007, but the reason for it remained under debate. Now it appears that milder winters are helping smaller sheep to survive, resulting in this unusual decrease in size.

2 He described it as a natural laboratory, with only the sheep and the vegetation there. He and his team also had access to detailed information about the sheep that had been collected over more than two decades. **3** The results indicated that the local environment was responsible. The winters on Hirta are very harsh. In the past, only the big, healthy sheep and large lambs that had piled on weight in their first summer could survive the winter, according to Professor Coulson.

4 Survival conditions are not so challenging. Even the slower growing sheep have a chance of making it. **5**

As for the future of the sheep, the team believes that they are still shrinking. Their next step will be to extend their study so that they are able to predict what will happen in the future. **6**

- A. Consequently, smaller individuals are becoming more and more common.
- B. Professor Tim Coulson said the island provided an ideal opportunity to study the sheep.
- C. But because of climate change, grass for food is now available for more months of the year.
- D. The team is reporting their work in the journal *Science*.
- E. Their legs have been getting steadily shorter and their body weight decreasing.
- F. They used a mathematical equation to work out why the sheep's body size was changing.
- G. But it's still too early to say if, in 100 years, we will have chihuahuas herding pocket-sized sheep!

Total: 6 marks